

\$37.4 million in reductions. The gentleman who offers this amendment does so because the budget allocation was higher across the board than he wanted. I would simply point out to the gentleman that in our subcommittee, we have reduced the budget outlay by 20 percent below the budget allocation for this bill. This Congress is leading by example. We have done the work. We have saved the money. I urge defeat of the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT].

The question was taken; and the Chair announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the provisions of House Resolution 473, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] will be postponed.

The Committee will rise informally.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CASTLE) assumed the Chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Edwin Thomas, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

The Committee resumed its sitting.

The CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 8 printed in House Report 104-663.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. CASTLE

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, I offer amendment No. 8.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 8 offered by Mr. CASTLE: Page 35, after line 22, insert the following new section.

SEC. 310. (a) Each mass mailing sent by a Member of the House of Representatives shall bear in a prominent place on its face, or on the envelope or outside cover or wrapper in which the mail matter is sent, the following notice: "THIS MAILING WAS PREPARED, PUBLISHED, AND MAILED AT TAXPAYER EXPENSE.", or a notice to the same effect in words which may be prescribed under subsection (c). The notice shall be printed in a type size not smaller than 7-point.

(b)(1) There shall be published in the itemized report of disbursements of the House of Representatives as required by law, a summary tabulation setting forth, for the office of each Member of the House of Representatives, the total number of pieces of mass mail mailed during the period involved and the total cost of those mass mailings.

(2) Each such tabulation shall also include—

(A) the total cost (as referred to in paragraph (1)) divided by the number (as deter-

mined by the Postmaster General) of addresses (other than business possible delivery stops) in the Congressional district from which the Member was elected (as such addresses are described in section 3210(d)(7)(B) of title 39, United States Code); and

(B) the total number of pieces of mass mail (as referred to in paragraph (1)) divided by the number (as determined by the Postmaster General) of addresses (other than business possible delivery stops) in the Congressional district from which the Member was elected (as such addresses are described in section 3210(d)(7)(B) of title 39, United States Code).

(c) The Committee on House Oversight shall prescribe such rules and regulations and shall take such other action as the Committee considers necessary and proper for Members to conform to the provisions of this subsection and applicable rules and regulations.

(d) For purposes of this section—

(1) the term "Member of the House of Representatives" means a Representative in, or a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress; and

(2) the term "mass mailing" has the meaning given such term by section 3210(a)(6)(E) of title 39, United States Code.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the House Resolution 473, the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE] and a Member opposed will each control 10 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE].

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I want to start my congratulating the chairman for what I think has been an excellent job of trimming the legislative appropriations, and particularly in the area that I am going to talk about, which is the taxpayer funding of franked mail.

The fiscal year 1997 level of funding will be 40 percent lower than the 1996 level of funding. That is an impressive reduction. I do not even know if the chairman is aware of the reductions over the course of years, but starting in the year I was first elected to this body, before I came here in 1992, it was \$59 million. In 1993 it went to \$47,711,000. In 1994 it went to \$40 million, in 1995 to \$31 million, in 1996 it went up to \$35,630,000, and this year is an appropriation of \$20 million, so it really is an extraordinary job that the chairman has done and that the Committee on House Oversight has done in addressing this particular situation.

In recognition of that, I do not intend, as I have in the past, to introduce an amendment to try to further reduce that funding. I think there are a couple of areas for which there is still room for improvement. Too often the franking privilege is not treated as a privilege and is abused. For example, the volume of outgoing franked mail vastly outpaces the volume of incoming mail.

In 1995, the House sent out four times more mail than it received. If the House had responded only to letters it received, franked mail costs would have been only \$12.4 million, saving \$18.6 million or 60 percent from actual mail costs. Also, use of the frank in-

creases cyclically during every election year. During the 102d Congress, the House spent \$31 million in 1991 and \$54 million in 1992, and during the 103d Congress, \$24 million in 1993, and \$42 million in 1994.

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The 104th Congress again has addressed and narrowed this gap in total spending, but the irresistible temptation for individual Members facing tough reelection campaigns to use their franking perk extensively in election years remains.

I think Members have a legitimate need to respond to the increasing concerns of their constituents and the franking privilege does facilitate this. I think the public understands this and would support that use of taxpayer dollars.

Unsolicited mass mail from Members, however, I think fails into a different category. I believe that most Americans do not want to receive all the unsolicited mail they get from Congress, particularly if they are aware of the fact that they as taxpayers pay for it themselves. Some Members here, I am certain, would disagree and would argue that the newsletter contains valuable and useful information. I am not trying to prevent that from being used. But I think we should give the public the information it needs to make the determination.

This is what the amendment, the taxpayer's right to know amendment, will do.

It has two components, both of which are based on procedures which the Senate already follows. The first component would require all mass mailings to contain the disclaimer, "This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense." This will encourage Members to be more judicious in the mass mailing they send to their constituents, and it is entirely consistent with this Congress's attempt to let sunshine disinfect the policy process.

The second part of the amendment would require the CAO's quarterly Statement of Disbursements to publish to total number of pieces of mass mail mailed during the period involved and the total cost of those mass mailings on a per-residential-address basis. Currently there is no way for the public to get information about the amount Members spend on unsolicited mass mailings versus constituent response mail. My amendment will allow this comparison to take place and I think the public has a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent.

The bottom line here is that this simple amendment will provide information to taxpayers about franked mass mail. It does not ban mass mailings or change the definition from current law. It simply requires public disclosure about the use of frank for mass mail.

I urge Members to pass this amendment.